

Grad Program FAQs

Enrollment Topics

How many credits must I enroll in?

Your enrollment levels are determined by your status with respect to program milestones. At a minimum, you must be enrolled/registered for any of the following to occur: defense of M.A. thesis or dissertation (minimum 1 credit); to receive any fellowship funds, including GOF and research and travel awards from the College or Graduate School; to hold a TA appointment (minimum 3 credits); to complete your comprehensive exam (unless you are doing so in a Summer semester following a Spring semester in which you were enrolled).

When should I register for courses/credits?

You should enroll for courses as soon as the schedule for the following year is available. Graduate courses that are underenrolled (fewer than 5 students) will be cancelled, per MSU policy. If you are working as a TA/RA over the summer and you are not enrolled for the upcoming fall semester, you will be terminated in the middle of the summer and have to be rehired. This can lead to a gap in pay.

How do I register?

Enrolled and registered are different. Misunderstanding these terms may cause you to be disenrolled and/or charged a late registration fee.

- **Enrolled** means that you have reserved your classes online.
- **Registered** means that you have:
 1. **Paid at least the Minimum Amount Due (MAD)** listed on your registration bill or on the Account Detail screen in [StuInfo](#).
 2. **Confirmed your attendance** in [StuInfo](#).
 3. **Cleared any holds** on your account (which may be viewed in [StuInfo](#)).

If you do not become a **registered** student:

- You can lose your classes.
- You will not receive a [refund](#).

Graduation Topics

What is the process for applying for graduation?

Apply for graduation before registrar deadlines, through registrar. To apply for graduation (M.A. or Ph.D.), you must do the following: 1) successfully defend the relevant project (thesis or dissertation), documented by a completion form with all committee members' signatures; 2) complete all degree requirements, as reviewed by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies; 3) turn in all paperwork to the Graduate Program Assistant; 4) be enrolled in at least 1 credit during the semester of defense.

The Graduate School requirements for documents and graduation must be followed. You can find those here:

<https://grad.msu.edu/etd>

After you successfully complete degree requirements and submit all paperwork, anticipate that degree conferral processes will take a period of 2-3 weeks to complete. Paperwork is processed by the Department, then the College of Social Science, the Graduate School, and the Registrar's Office. Final paperwork sign-offs may occur after the end of the semester in which you graduate, depending on when you submit all paperwork. Do not worry – this will not delay or change the semester in which your degree is conferred, as long as you meet university deadlines.

Whom should I contact with questions about graduation paperwork?

First be sure to visit the Registrar website to complete the application for graduation. Then you may contact the Graduate Program Assistant, unless you have questions about ProQuest or formatting, in which case you should contact The Graduate School. Please **do not** contact the College of

Social Science or The Graduate School unless you have been advised to do so by the Graduate Program Assistant or Associate Chair for Graduate Studies.

Course requirements, overrides, and course waiver Topics

Can I transfer courses from outside MSU?

In some circumstances, you can transfer courses. These requests are evaluated by the Associate Chair and the faculty responsible for teaching courses in the content area of the proposed transfer course. It is important to note that if you do transfer a course and you include that course on your Ph.D. plan of the study, the date you took that course (at the previous institution) will begin the official MSU “clock” for your Ph.D. Thus, transfers typically shorten the time you have to complete your Ph.D. at MSU. For this reason, you may explore a waiver of a requirement in lieu of a transfer.

How do I waive a course requirement?

Equivalency of courses to replace the departmental 815 requirement is evaluated by Psychology Department faculty who administer the Concentration in Quantitative Methodology and Evaluation (QMES) faculty. The process is overseen by the Graduate Program Director/Associate Chair for Graduate Studies.

Additional course requirements are set at the Graduate Program level and the decision to waive a course or allow a replacement for a required area group course are administered by the program area faculty.

Waivers for any course (the 815 departmental requirement) or an interest group course are documented via MOU signed by the Associate Chair for Graduate Students, the student, and another faculty member (QMES faculty member for 815, interest group faculty members for interest group courses).

How do I get an override into a course?

To obtain an override into a graduate course, please begin by requesting an override from the faculty member teaching the course. Then the faculty member will submit a formal request through the Graduate Portal and include the student's PID, the course # and the section # and semester of the override.

Funding for research and travel topics

What funds are available to support my research and travel from the Graduate School?

<https://grad.msu.edu/research-support>

<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/fellowships/Travel%20funding%20application.pdf>

Some limits apply; for example, you are limited to \$600 total in travel enhancement funding and \$1000 in research enhancement from the Graduate School.

International travel may also be eligible for contributions from OISS.

What funds are available to support my research and travel from the College of Social Science?

CSS offers Corey and Thompson awards for support of graduate student research.

<https://socialscience.msu.edu/graduate/research-support.html>

What funds are available to support my research and travel from the Psychology Department?

The Department offers awards through the GOF program. These funds are allocated as a fellowship. You must be enrolled to be eligible. Receipt of funds can impact your financial aid. Please reach out to the Associate Chair for issues concerning fellowship impact on your financial aid.

Graduate Office Fellowship (GOF) Procedures and Priorities, 2019-2020

Purpose: GOF monies are provided by the Graduate School to the Department (via allocation by the College of Social Science) to support graduate training. Priorities are set by the Graduate Program Director of the Department. All awards are subject to approval by the College of Social Science and the Graduate School and must adhere to MSU policies.

Timing: GOF funds are typically available for requests between mid-September through mid-March. These funds are used to support graduate student research and professional activities across the entire year (Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters). Funds cannot be allocated between mid-March and mid-September, so awards to support activities over the spring and summer must be placed prior to mid-March.

Priorities and considerations: GOF monies will be used to materially support scholarly development of graduate students in the Department. Because funds are limited, they are allotted according to specified criteria. Priority is determined by three criteria: 1) the fit between the request and the identified target activities/investments; 2) the student's standing in the program – both year since enrollment and academic standing; and 3) the student's history of GOF funding. To maintain a consistent level of support for all our students in subsequent years, the Department will be evaluating the effectiveness of our previous targets and making new investments to maximize the benefits produced by GOF support.

2019-2020 target investments

- Highest priority = material support for conducting student-driven research [e.g., questionnaire rights, participant payment, materials, purchasing access to data, etc.]; highest priority to funds supporting dissertation and MA research projects, followed by other student-generated research. GOF funds are not to be allocated to support faculty generated research.
- Lower priority = travel to professional conferences. Highest priority among these will be for students presenting paper(s) at a major professional conference, followed by students presenting a poster at a major professional conference. The Associate Chair will review each student's history of requests and travel support funding will be prioritized for students whose cumulative travel support allocation is lower.
- Lowest priority = costs of attending workshops (research or professional development)

Student standing

- Students are eligible for priority GOF support during years 1-5 of the program. Students must be in good academic standing to be eligible for support, as determined by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies based on annual report and milestone completion records.
- Students in year 6+ of the program may be considered for GOF support if they are in good academic standing as determined by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies based on annual report and milestone completion records.
- GOF funding for students in year 6+ in good academic standing will be considered primarily for requests for direct material support related to the completion of dissertation research. Other request types will be a low priority for students in years 6+, absent compelling justification.

Student history of GOF funding

- All GOF allocations are recorded by the Office of Graduate Studies. All else being equal (i.e., requests of similar amounts, for the same investment; students all in good standing), students who have cumulatively received more GOF funds in past cycles will be lower priority than those who have received less GOF support.

Procedures and documentation:

To begin the request process, please initiate the GOF via the Grad Portal at psychology.msu.edu. Requests submitted via email cannot be considered. Include your name, the total amount requested, the proof of acceptance if presenting at a conference, and the timeline (when the funds would need to be delivered) in the request and fill out the MSU google form to provide full details.

Here is the link for providing detailed pre-award request information:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfBYrx4Urffs6ndxYY7AuOHkQL_ouCd-t4P1zcKzDxPIXZrw/viewform?usp=sf_link

\Please discuss your funding requests with your mentor and provide them with the GOF form to indicate the funding they will provide as part of the request.

Requests will only be considered between September 15, 2019 and March 15, 2020.

Requests are processed as fellowships. In order to prevent inadvertent issues with student financial aid, the Department must be able to provide the Office of Financial Aid detailed information about the expenses associated with the GOF fellowship monies. To that end, all GOF requests must include specific information regarding expenses and after the funds have been used for the approved purpose, students must submit a post-award report with documentation of expenses for accountability. The post-award report must be submitted via the Grad Portal within 15 business days of the funds being depleted (i.e., the expenses detailed in the request are

incurred) OR 90 days after the GOF funds were allocated to the student, whichever comes first. Failure to submit post-award reports makes students ineligible for subsequent GOF requests until prior allocations are properly documented.

Here is the link for providing detailed pre-award request information:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfBYrx4Urffs6ndxYY7Au0HkQL_ouCd-t4P1zcKzDxPIXZrw/viewform?usp=sf_link

Forms for documenting program milestones

Where can I find MA forms?

<https://psychology.msu.edu/students/grad/current-student/mastersforms>

Where can I find Ph.D. program forms?

<https://psychology.msu.edu/students/grad/current-student/phdforms>

Independent study courses topics

How do I enroll in an independent study course?

For a variety of reasons, you may wish to receive formal credits for independent study for content not covered by any existing courses. These requests must have the support of a faculty member who agrees to serve as the instructor for the independent study. Requests must be submitted through the Graduate Portal, and should include the course number, topic, and documentation of agreement with the faculty member who will serve as instructor. The independent study approval form can be found here:

<https://psychology.msu.edu/students/grad/current-student/mastersforms>

The ORG program has a formal requirement that students take independent study (PSY 890) in the Fall and Spring semester of your first year.

“Time clocks” topics

When does my Ph.D. “clock” begin?

The timeline to complete the Ph.D. begins with the first course that appears on your doctoral plan of study. The semester of that course is considered the beginning of your Ph.D. timeline. By MSU policy, you have 5 years from that semester to complete the comprehensive exam and 8 years to complete all Ph.D. requirements. If you take courses during your MA years that are not on your MA plan of study, these courses will start your PhD clock unless you specify that they not be counted towards either degree.

Teaching assistant policies topics

Where can I find the GEU contract?

<http://geuatmsu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/GEU-2019-2023-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

What are departmental expectations of TAs?

Department of Psychology

Graduate Teaching Assistantship Policies & Expectations

All graduate students in the Department who are in good standing receive guaranteed funding for the first 4 years they are in the program. This funding comes in the form of graduate assistantships (GA, RA, TA), many of which are funded and administered by the Department.

Assistantships are employment that is remunerated in the form of stipend, tuition remission, and benefits. The broader context of assistantships is that they are both a job and a critical part of graduate training, as these positions provide experience in performing essential elements of an academic position. Various policies and rules govern assistantships, including the University's obligations as your employer and your obligations as an employee of the University.

For TAs, you can find the details of the most recent GEU/MSU contract governing your position here:

<http://geuatmsu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/GEU-2019-2023-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

Please see the Graduate Program Handbook for important information regarding these policies, especially section 10.

This document clarifies some of the most relevant (and sometimes overlooked) policies and details how these policies inform expectations that the Department holds for the teaching assistant position. For information about GA and RA positions, please see the Graduate Program Handbook.

1. A student funded as a "half-time TA" is being paid for 20 hours per week of work. Because of the nature of teaching obligations and the semester schedule, our expectation (consistent with the GEU collective bargaining agreement with MSU) is that half-time TAs will work – *on average* – 20 hours per week. This means that TAs may have more work to do during weeks of exams, papers, or other heavy preparation or grading periods and less work during quieter periods. Busier weeks may exceed 20 hours while other weeks will require less than 20 hours of work. TAs should discuss workload with the course instructor so that TAs can plan their semesters in light of the timing of major assignments and evaluations and the anticipated time burden of each. University policy is that graduate students with assistantships may work up to 40 hours during the week of finals week, the periods between semesters, the first week of fall classes, and during summer semester. Otherwise, TAs may not work more than 29 hours per week (20 hours for international students) in their university positions.
2. The start date for Fall TA positions (which marks the beginning of the first pay period) is August 16 and the end date is December 31. The start date for Spring TA positions is January 1 and the end date is May 15. TA duties can begin after the start date for the relevant semester. TA duties are not over until the end of these appointments. TAs should discuss with the course instructor the anticipated date on which duties for the course will be completed. The Department expects that TAs are available to complete their duties for the entirety of this period. Do not plan to be unavailable to work during the first week of classes or before the time and date when final grades are due to the Registrar's office (typically 4 PM on the Tuesday following the end of finals week). The GEU contract allows for TA duties to continue through 3 days past the grade submission date.

3. Do not schedule time away from campus (especially personal travel during the first and final 2 weeks of the semester) without first clearing absences with the course instructor. Please notify the instructor regarding your pending travel plans for other periods during the semester and discuss how these may impact your TA duties so that you can come to an agreement about how any anticipated issues will be addressed.
4. Departmental TAs include proctoring for some exams for courses other than the one for which you provide instructional assistance. All TAs, with the possible exception of those who are running discussion sections, will be asked to serve as proctors throughout the semester, including finals week, to assist in maintaining exam integrity in our large courses. Proctoring assignments are made at the beginning of the semester. Proctors are expected to fulfill their assignments by arriving on time to the assigned exams and assisting the course instructor with exam administration. The number of proctored exams is determined by departmental need and the number of teaching assistants available to meet that need, but these assignments should not result in a TA working more than the 20 hours a week average time commitment.
5. TAs are expected to fulfill their role with professionalism and to contribute positively to the undergraduate teaching mission of the Department. That includes timeliness, decorum, concern for the learning environment created for students, responsiveness to feedback from students and the course instructor, accuracy and fairness in grading, and generally behaving as if the assistantship is a regular job. In fact, a TAship is a real job! Supporting the course instructor and the students helps the Department fulfill the undergraduate teaching mission. The Department expects TAs to show initiative, a willingness to take on tasks to help the course run smoothly, attention to detail, and diligence in performing all tasks.
6. TAs are evaluated every semester by the instructor of the course for which they are TAing. In addition to being in good academic standing in the program, students must meet minimum performance and professionalism standards in their TA responsibilities to be eligible for subsequent TA funding. Graduate students who have underperformed in these capacities may not be eligible for future TA funding. See below for language from the GEU contract regarding unsatisfactory performance.

IV. Procedure for Unsatisfactory Performance When employment performance is unsatisfactory, the employment duties may be reduced and employment fraction and pay may be reduced correspondingly, or employment may be terminated. In cases of unsatisfactory employment performance, the matter will first be discussed with the Employee prior to any action being taken. If the Employer determines that the existing situation can be corrected by the Employee and is of such a nature that correction is appropriate, the Employee will be given not less than one calendar week from date of discussion to make the correction. A written summary of such a discussion will be available at the written request of the Employee provided the request is received within forty-eight (48) hours of the discussion. When allowed by law, a copy of this summary will be provided to the Union.

V. Discipline The parties recognize

the authority of the Employer to suspend, discharge, or take other appropriate disciplinary action against Employees for just cause. Discharge may result from an accumulation of minor infractions as well as for a single serious infraction. Whenever it is appropriate, the Employer shall give the Employee advance notice of its intent to hold an investigatory interview. An Employee shall be entitled to the presence of a Union Representative at an investigatory interview if he/she has reasonable grounds to believe that the interview may be used to support disciplinary action against him/her, and he/she requests representation. If any discipline is taken against an Employee, the Employee will receive a copy of the disciplinary action. In the event that an Employee is discharged, the Employee will receive a copy of the notice of discharge, including a summary of the reasons for the discharge. When allowed by law, the Union will be provided a copy of any notice of discharge. An Employee may appeal a suspension or discharge beginning at Step Two of the Grievance Procedure.

7. Instructional task expectations for specific TA responsibilities will vary across course and instructor. Accordingly, TAs are advised to consult with the course instructor to clarify expectations.
8. Questions or concerns about TA responsibilities, assignments, and overall experience should be directed to the course instructor or to the Graduate Program Director.

For further materials related to this document, please see the GEU Collective Bargaining Agreement, available at:

<http://geuatmsu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/GEU-2019-2023-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

Responsible Conduct of Research Training requirements topics

RCR guidelines

Department of Psychology

If you entered the program in 2016 or prior, you may follow the guidelines outlined in the August 2018 Graduate Programs Handbook or you may choose to follow the new policies outlined below. Language from the handbook as follows:

In line with departmental and university policy, you are expected to engage in formal training related to research ethics. The requirement is at least 5 hours of formal training in one's first year and 3 hours each year after that until program completion. Each individual should consult with his/her advisor to plan training for the year.

For all other students (entering Fall 2017 and later), here are the RCR requirements to fulfill both The Graduate School and Department of Psychology requirements:

**note: these are listed by year in the program; if you have not fulfilled requirements for prior years, you are obligated to complete those prior to completing your degree and ideally as soon as possible.*

Before you complete your degree, you must satisfy the following:

1. Completed 7 CITI modules (described below)
2. A minimum of 6 total hours of discussion-based training (i.e., not online modules)
3. 3 hours of refresher training every year in years 3 and beyond (until you graduate); these hours count toward the 6 hour minimum noted above in #2; if you are enrolled for more than 4 years, you will exceed that 6 hour total minimum by completing 3 refresher hours each year in years 3+.

Please note: MSU includes completion of RCR requirements and evidence of IRB approval for theses and dissertations as requirements for degree completion (MA, Ph.D).

Requirements by year in the program

Year 1

- Complete 4 CITI online modules: Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research; Authorship; Plagiarism; Research Misconduct

Year 2

- Complete 3 additional CITI online modules, selected from among the following: CITI Collaborative Research • CITI Conflicts of Interest • CITI Data Management • CITI Financial Responsibility • CITI Mentoring • CITI Peer Review • IACUC Tutorial for Animal Care Training (in <http://Train.ORA.msu.edu>) • Human Research Protection/ IRB Certification (in <http://Train.ORA.msu.edu>) • Rigor and Reproducibility Course

Year 3

- 3 hours of refresher training, to be comprised of discussion-based training and/or online courses offered by The Graduate School

- Discussion-based training can include coursework in the Department of Psychology or another department at MSU. The syllabus for the course must be submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for review and approval. The Associate Chair will document this approval and indicate the number of hours the submission tallies toward the required 3 hours. This decision may require information from the course instructor.
- Discussion-based training can include professional development seminars or trainings in the Department of Psychology or elsewhere. Materials for the seminar or training must be submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for review and approval. The Associate Chair will document this approval and indicate the number of hours the submission tallies toward the required 3 hours. This decision may require information from the organizer of the seminar or training.

Year 4

- 3 hours of refresher training, to be comprised of discussion-based training and/or online courses offered by The Graduate School
- Discussion-based training can include coursework in the Department of Psychology or another department at MSU. The syllabus for the course must be submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for review and approval. The Associate Chair will document this approval and indicate the number of hours the submission tallies toward the required 3 hours. The Associate Chair will document this approval and indicate the number of hours the submission tallies toward the required 3 hours. This decision may require information from the course instructor.
- Discussion-based training can include professional development seminars or trainings in the Department of Psychology or elsewhere. Materials for the seminar or training must be submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for review and approval. The Associate Chair will document this approval and indicate the number of hours the submission tallies toward the required 3 hours. This decision may require information from the organizer of the seminar or training.

Year 5 and beyond

- 3 hours of refresher training, to be comprised of discussion-based training and/or online courses offered by The Graduate School
- Discussion-based training can include coursework in the Department of Psychology or another department at MSU. The syllabus for the course must be submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for review and approval. The Associate Chair will document this approval and indicate the number of hours the submission tallies toward the required 3 hours. This decision may require information from the course instructor.
- Discussion-based training can include professional development seminars or trainings in the Department of Psychology or elsewhere. Materials for the seminar or training must be submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate

Studies for review and approval. The Associate Chair will document this approval and indicate the number of hours the submission tallies toward the required 3 hours. This decision may require information from the organizer of the seminar or training.

For students graduating with a terminal MA:

If you opt to leave the program after completing your MA, then you must complete the requirements listed above under **Year 1** and **Year 2**, plus **a minimum of 6 hours of discussion-based training**. These hours are defined by the same criteria listed above.

Discussion-based training occurring in years 1-2

Although the Graduate School does not require discussion-based training in years 1-2 for Ph.D. students, the Department recognizes that this form of RCR training is best suited for providing information specific to research ethics in psychological research and for engaging students and faculty in reasoning about ethical decision-making in our particular research contexts.

Therefore, the Department of Psychology will allow students to account for any such discussion-based training that is conducted *in the Department* (i.e., in coursework or professional development seminars) to count towards the total number of discussion-based hours that are required in years 3+. To do so, the training must meet the other criteria articulated above and be conducted in the Department of Psychology. Further, in counting forward these hours, students may only apply a maximum of 2 hours of this year 1-2 discussion-based training into any of the year 3, year 4, or year 5+ tally periods. Therefore, students must still do **at least 1 hour** of discussion-based training each year in years 3+ if they count forward any year 1-2 hours. This insures that students demonstrate that they are engaging in ongoing refresher training each year.

Record keeping

Students will be responsible for tracking their RCR activities in the google form provided by the Associate Chair. It should be updated as activities are completed and updated no later than April 15 of each academic year so that the Graduate Secretary can review this information as degree completion paperwork is being prepared.

Logs of RCR completion will be a part of each student's record maintained on file in the Department of Psychology.

The Associate Chair will be responsible for maintaining records of syllabi, coursework, and trainings submitted for RCR approval and the decision made in each case; this will insure continuity and consistency in decision-making.

Summer appointments: RA vs. TA vs. hourly topics

What are the differences among summer funding types?

Your appointments cover stipend and tuition remission for the Fall and Spring semesters. Summer appointments are handled separately. Students can pursue appointments outside of the Department, or research and teaching positions within the Department. A limited number of summer teaching positions are available each summer; these involve serving as the instructor for an online PSY course. These are formal TA appointments that include both stipend and a tuition remission. If you have one of these summer TA appointments, you should consider how to use the tuition remission available with these appointments. Most students use these for research credits (899 or 999), although they could also be used to enroll in a summer course. Students can also be funded for research work, either in a RA appointment or as an hourly employee. Summer RAships include stipend and tuition remission, while hourly appointments do not include tuition remission (they include hourly pay equivalent to the student's prior Spring semester pay rate on assistantship). Because of the additional cost associated with an RAship versus hourly pay, the RAship should only be used when there is a clear need for the student to have the tuition remission. Otherwise, an hourly appointment is the appropriate choice. Students paid as an hourly appointment must follow departmental HR guidelines around hiring, submission of time sheets, and all other matters in order to start and maintain an hourly employee summer position.

Pay scale topics

How are level changes for TA/RA assignments determined?

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, LEVEL I. Graduate students with the bachelor's degree and less than one year's experience as graduate assistants or as full-support fellows. They conduct research, perform administrative tasks or other supervised duties such as reading and grading papers.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, LEVEL II. Graduate students with a relevant master's degree or equivalent and/or one year's experience as graduate assistants or as full-support fellows in the appointing department or school or in a unit considered relevant by the chairperson of the appointing department or school. They conduct research, grade papers, or perform administrative tasks with moderate supervision. Advancement from Level I to Level II is usually routine.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, LEVEL III. Graduate students who have successfully completed doctoral comprehensive exams, as defined by the department in which the student is enrolled, and have experience as a graduate RA/TE at Michigan State University, or equivalent. The minimum number of semesters shall be four (4), five (5) or six (6). The definition of equivalent experience as an RA/TE is left to the discretion of the chairperson of the appointing unit, but it is expected that only experience in research-oriented assignments will count toward the six semesters of experience as an RA. (Consistent with current practice, 1/4 time and 3/4 time appointments count the same as 1/2 time appointments, and summer semesters count the same as fall and spring semesters.)

How is the level determined?

Levels are determined as follows: (In counting the number of semesters -- percent-time is not a factor, Summer Semesters count the same as Fall and Spring Semesters.)

Level 1 requires that each of the following 3 criteria be met:

- admitted MSU graduate student
- bachelor's degree
- less than two semester's experience as a graduate assistant or full-support fellow

Level 2 is required when each of the following 3 criteria is met:

- admitted MSU graduate student
- master's degree (a JD or LLB is equivalent to masters in determining level); OR 30 or more grad semester credits or equivalent; OR at least two semester's experience as a graduate assistant or full-support fellow
- level 3 required criteria have not been met

Level 3 is required for Teaching (T) when each of the following 3 criteria is met:

- admitted MSU graduate student
- a master's degree or equivalent
- The graduate assistant experience must be in the employing unit or in a department considered relevant by the chairperson or employing unit. The minimum number of semesters shall be four (4), five (5) or six (6) but in any case no greater than department's current practice as stipulated in 2004. The Psychology Department's requirement is 6 semesters

Level 3 is required for Research (R) or Teaching (TE) assistants when each of the following 3 criteria are met:

- admitted MSU graduate student
- successful completion of doctoral comprehensive exams, as defined by the department in which the student is enrolled
- 6 semesters as a graduate Research/Teaching (R/TE) assistant at MSU, or equivalent. The definition of equivalence is left to the discretion of the chairperson of the appointing unit, but it is expected that only experience in research-oriented assignments count toward the 6 semesters of experience as an RA

(Level 3 is not acceptable for Research (R) or Teaching (TE) unless all 3 criteria listed above are met.)

Assistantship requirements topics

What are MSU policies about graduate assistantships?

<https://www.hr.msu.edu/employment/graduate-assistants/faqs.html>

How do tuition waivers for assistantships work?

For the tuition waiver to go into effect, you must be enrolled in 3 credits, regardless of full-time status enrollment requirements based on your stage in the program.

What are the credit enrollment requirements for graduate assistants?

Semester	Appointment	Minimum Credits			Maximum Credits Excluding 899/999	
		Master	PhD Pre Comp	PhD* Post Comp	Master	PhD
Fall, Spring	Quarter-time	6	3	1	16	16
	Half-time	6	3	1	12	12
	Three-Quarter time	3	3	1	8	8
Summer	All	3	3	1	None	None

"Full-time status" for doctoral students is defined as a minimum of 1 credit for those students who: 1) Have successfully completed all comprehensive exams and are actively engaged in dissertation

research; OR 2) Are doing department-approved off-campus fieldwork related to preparation of their dissertation (up to a maximum of three semesters).

How are tuition credits initiated?

When you are hired as a graduate assistant the graduate office submits your PID to the registrar for generating the tuition credits.

Are graduate assistants allowed to take more than 9 credits (the maximum covered by the graduate assistant tuition waiver)?

Graduate assistants may take more than 9 credits. There is no need for a letter to be sent to the Graduate Appointment Office or the Graduate School for approval. However, the graduate assistant tuition waiver will NOT be applied to any credits beyond the first 9 credits. For summer semester, the maximum number of credits covered by the tuition waiver is 5. The Graduate School has a limited number of tuition credits available via a pool for the Fall and Spring semesters. They are only available to students appointed as a TA for the semester in question. These can be used to pay for courses exceeding the 9 credit assistantship benefit. The application must be supported by a faculty letter confirming that the credits are required for the student's program. More information is available here (when the tuition pool is open): <https://grad.msu.edu/tatuitionpool>

ASSISTANTSHIP BENEFITS topics:

How are students enrolled in health insurance?

Graduate assistants, medical and international students will be automatically enrolled in the student insurance coverage.

<https://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/graduate-assistants/index.html>

Michigan State University offers health, dental and vision coverage to graduate assistants and their eligible dependents. If you have questions about the graduate assistant insurance plans, please contact MSU Human Resources at 800-353-4434 or email SolutionsCenter@hr.msu.edu.

What dates are covered by a graduate assistant's health insurance?

- Fall Appointment only: August 15th to February 14th of the following year
- Fall and Spring Appointment: August 15th to August 14th of the following year
- Spring Appointment only: January 1st to August 14th
- Summer Appointment only: May 15th to August 14th

Financial aid topics

How do I contact the Office of Financial Aid?

Office of financial Aid

Office hours and location

[Student Service Building, Room 252](#)

No appointment is necessary. Office hours are 9 AM to 4:45 PM Monday through Friday.

Mailing address

Office of Financial Aid

Student Services Building

556 E. Circle Drive, Room 252

Michigan State University

East Lansing, MI 48824

By phone

If you wish to discuss student-specific information over the phone, you (the student) must first setup your [security questions in StuInfo](#). We are unable to answer any questions about your aid package until this process has been completed.

Phone: (517) 353-5940 ([Hours](#))

Fax: (517) 432-1155

Vacation/time off/medical leave topics

Can I take time off from RA or TA duties during the semester in which I am appointed?

Time away from assistantship duties

MSU official holidays are as follows: New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day; Memorial Day; July 4th; Labor Day; Thanksgiving and the following Friday; Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Work is not permitted on MSU holidays, including for Research and Teaching Assistants.

Appointment periods for assistantships have the following start and end dates:

Fall: August 16-December 31

Spring: January 1 – May 15

Teaching Assistants may work through 3 days after the grade submission deadlines.

Fall TA last work date = December 20, 2019

Spring TA last work date = May 8, 2020

Research Assistants do not have a restriction on work dates and may work through the full appointment period.

Semester	Graduate Assistantship Assignment (50% appointment)	Paid Dates	Paid days	Max work load (days/hours)	Last work date
Fall 08/16 – 12/31	Teaching Assistant	08/16 – 12/20 (minus 6 MSU holidays)	75	63/252	12/20
	Research Assistant		75	69/276	12/31*
Spring 01/01 – 05/15	Teaching Assistant	01/01 – 05/08 (minus 1 MSU holiday and Spring Break)	98	87	05/08
	Research Assistant		98	92	05/15*

*Research Assistants do not have a restriction on work dates and may work through the full appointment period.

Table notes: Paid days and maximum work load

Both RAs and TAs are paid for 75 days of work in Fall 2019 and for 98 days of work in Spring of 2020.

Fall Semester: TAs are allowed to work for 63 days in the Fall (Aug 16-Dec 20, minus 6 MSU holidays). RAs are allowed to work for 69 days (Aug 16-Dec 31, minus 6 holidays).

Spring Semester: TAs are allowed to work for 87 days in Spring 2020 (Jan 1 – May 8, minus 1 holiday and Spring Break) and RAs for 92 days (Jan 1 – May 15, minus 1 holiday and Spring Break).

Half-time assistantships have an expectation of 20 hours per week on average across the appointment period, for a total maximum number of **252 hours** during Fall for TAs and **276 hours** during Fall for RAs. For Spring, TAs may work a **348 hours** maximum and RAs for **368 hours**.

The Spring appointment period is somewhat longer than the Fall, but each covers 4.5-5 months of employment.

The Department recommends that students on half-time time assistantships be granted a total of 5 vacation/time off days **each** appointment period (Fall, Spring), which corresponds to roughly 1 day per month allotted. Students should give reasonable notice about time away to faculty supervisors and the student and faculty supervisor should work together to allocate those days in ways that offer reasonable time for students and for accommodating work duties that are time critical.

Under no circumstances should student work hours as a Research or Teaching Assistant during either Fall or Spring semester appointment that exceed the maximums noted above.

Medical leave for students is not covered under this policy. Students considering medical leave should consult with the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for assistance; policies vary for Research and Teaching Assistantships.

What are Research/Graduate Assistant Illness, Injury, and Pregnancy Leave Policies?

These policies can be found here:

<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s351>

Using the grad portal for requests topics

Which requests should be submitted through the grad portal?

You should make formal requests for assistance using the Psychology Grad Portal at psychology.msu.edu

The following request types should be initiated in the portal (not via email to the Associate Chair or Graduate Program Assistant): requests for overrides into graduate courses (completed by the professor teaching the course); requests for funding (GOF, Research or Travel Enhancement funds); notification of dissertation defense dates

Terminal MA policy topics

When is a terminal M.A. appropriate?

Although the Department of Psychology does not offer terminal M.A. programs to which students can apply, Ph.D. students typically earn a M.A. degree in the program. For a variety of reasons, some students admitted to the Ph.D. program in Psychology may not continue on in the program to complete the Ph.D. In some of those cases, a terminal M.A. degree may be appropriate for the student. The decision regarding a terminal M.A. involves the student, program faculty, and the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies. This is an uncommon outcome but it is often appropriate for students who develop different educational objectives during the first years of graduate school.

What is a terminal M.A.?

Area groups within the department offer different types of M.A. projects (Plan A or Plan B). MSU refers to a formal thesis as the *Plan A* option and a project-based research study as the *Plan B* option. The Clinical, Ecological/Community, Organizational and Social/Personality groups typically require a *Plan A* thesis while the Behavioral Neuroscience and Cognition & Cognitive Neuroscience Programs typically require a *Plan B* project. Students with individualized, interdisciplinary plans of study need to work with their committees to determine whether a Plan A or Plan B project should be completed. The Department's Graduate Office must be informed prior to any data collection.

A terminal M.A. is the final degree a student will seek from the Department of Psychology. That is, they will not continue in the program in pursuit of the Ph.D. In cases where students will not be continuing on to the Ph.D. program, the student, advisor, and M.A. thesis committee members may recommend that the student pursue a Plan B option, even in area groups where Plan A is the typical requirement. A new plan of study/amendments are required if moving to Plan B from plan A.

A terminal M.A. is granted when the student meets requirements for the M.A. degree, completes a M.A. project that is acceptable to the M.A. thesis committee, these requirements have been reviewed by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, and degree completion is reviewed and accepted by the College of Social Science and The Graduate School.

What is the procedure for exploring the option of a terminal M.A.?

The typical process for seeking a terminal M.A. begins as a discussion between student and advisor or program chair. This discussion should consider the student's progress in the program, their post-MSU plans, and where the student stands with an M.A. project (e.g., defended and approved, defended, proposed, not yet conducted).

It is important that after student and advisor have discussed options including a terminal M.A. that the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies is informed of this decision. There are timing requirements associated with appointments and funding that need to be addressed. Some are related to planning for TA coverage (e.g., meeting course needs if a TA needs to be replaced), and some are HR issues (e.g., students who are leaving MSU need to complete mundane tasks like returning keys). Timely inclusion of the Associate Chair for Graduate Students makes sure that these tasks are coordinated and that the pathway to the terminal MA is free from administrative hurdles.

From the student perspective, timely notification also helps to ensure that the student meets all requirements for M.A. graduation. Paperwork routing time needs to be factored in, especially if the student wants to start a job with the final M.A. paperwork (verified by the Registrar's Office) in hand. All degree paperwork passes through multiple university offices. The Associate Chair and Graduate Program Coordinator are here to assist students with this process so that it is smooth, any questions are answered, and all deadlines are met.

International student issues topics

How do I find out about issues specific to international students?

Because many of these policies can change frequently along with federal law and guidelines, please reach out directly to OISS.

<https://oiss.isp.msu.edu/>

<https://oiss.isp.msu.edu/immigration1/visa-immigration/status/>